

MASS 306 - LEC 4013  
Asst. Prof: Jonathan Berman

Media Distribution  
Office: Craven 6127  
email: [jberman@csusm.edu](mailto:jberman@csusm.edu)

Spring 2009  
Phone: 760-750-8085

Office hours: Craven 6127, Mondays 2-3PM & Wednesdays 2-3PM; other times by appointment

Class Location: ACADEMIC HALL 201 Meetings: Mondays 7PM - 9:45PM

### **Course Description**

This course explores how media products are found, shared, popularized, and commoditized. We examine the works' dynamic relationship to audience in a world where many consumers are now also producers. Media considered include film, video, audio, web information, books and more.

Through a combination of a) texts that look at current trends in distribution, b) lecture and discussion c) meetings with media professionals and d) group work, this course aims to make bring alive the theory and practice of new models of distribution from across the media landscape.

### **Goals**

- To understand physical & digital media distribution theory and practice
- To explore the viral nature of modern digital media in the age of "free" products
- To consider media "findability;" how we locate media products in a world where computing is everywhere?
- To apply theories to real life case studies and create distribution plans
- To use your new knowledge towards becoming critical & enlightened media consumer and producers
- To distinguish the evolving technology & organizations of distribution and the related opportunities

### **Grading**

Class Attendance & Participation	25%
2 Tests on the Textbooks 10% & 15%	25%
Midterm Paper (minimum 5 pgs)	25%
Group Work & Consult Paper (minimum 5 pgs)	25%

More than two recorded missed classes will lower grades two steps, for example from A- to B- More than three recorded absences will likely result in an "F." Attendance is taken on a random basis.

Be prepared for each class with at least one question that you have that relates to the reading. To do that, you must read the assigned chapters for the classes by the Tuesday of following week.

Midterm and final papers will be discussed in further detail during the semester. A few notes:

- a) papers must each have at least two sources quoted – at least one from texts, another from expert source
- b) do not quote from Wikipedia, that's a point of departure, not a trusted source
- c) best if you submit a paragraph or tell me in office hours so I can give you feedback/guidance

## Texts

Your first text is digital and free, like much of our media:

1. Anderson, Chris. *Free: Why \$0.00 Is the Future of Business*

[http://www.longtail.com/the\\_long\\_tail/2009/07/free-for-free-first-ebook-and-audiobook-versions-released.html](http://www.longtail.com/the_long_tail/2009/07/free-for-free-first-ebook-and-audiobook-versions-released.html)

and/or the review of *Free*:

[http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/07/06/090706crbo\\_books\\_gladwell?currentPage=all](http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2009/07/06/090706crbo_books_gladwell?currentPage=all)

1. Anderson, Chris. *The Long Tail* (Hyperion Books; 1<sup>st</sup> ed., 2006)

Narrowcasting and niche markets are the future of media and commerce.

2. Gladwell, Malcolm. *The Tipping Point* (NACS/Back Bay Books, 2002)

How do ideas and products “catch on” and become “viral”?

3. Morville, Peter. *Ambient Findability* (O’Reilly; 1st ed., 2005)

With the advent of the “long tail,” and computing everywhere, how do we make our media findable?

## Schedule and Assignments, by Week

We will have in-class guests through the semester. We'll also be peppering the semester with discussions of Anderson's *Free* and the review link above.

1. August 31: COURSE INTRO syllabus, course objectives, survey

- What would you'd like to get from this class. Get specific...
- Reading: Chapters 1- 5 of *The Long Tail* (these are always to be read for the next week).

\*. SEPT 7: LABOR DAY, CAMPUS CLOSED\*

3. Sept 14 THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE HITS & NICHEs, PHYSICAL & DIGITAL

- Reading Assignment: Chapters 6-9 of *The Long Tail*
- Assignment- Start thinking about your group project. What existing videos, songs, websites do you know of that could use some help?

\* SEPT 21: NO CLASS, FURLOUGH DAY FOR J BERMAN (See Furlough Notice Below)\*

4. SEPT 28: THE NEW PRODUCERS, AGGREGATORS, FILTERS, AND POWER LAWS

- Assignment: Begin to work your on paper by choosing a topic of inquiry- what media hardware or system interests you? Write a paragraph on it and post it to our site.
- Reading Assignment: Chapters 10- end of *The Long Tail*

5. Oct 5: CHOICES, NICHE CULTURE & SUMMARY OF THE LONG TAIL

- PARAGRAPH ABOUT PAPER 1 DUE recommended but not required
- Reading assignment: *The Tipping Point*, Intro – Chapter 2

6. Oct 12: EPIDEMICS & THE LAW OF THE FEW  
 THURS OCT 2nd: QUIZ on terms from *The Long Tail* (10%)  
 • Reading assignment: *The Tipping Point*, Chapters 3 - 4
7. Oct 19: STICKINESS AND CONTEXT  
 • Reading Assignment *The Tipping Point*, 5 – END
8. Oct 26: CASE STUDIES & SUMMARY OF “TIPPING POINT”  
 Airwalk, others. No reading assignment this week.  
**OCTOBER 16: PAPER 1 DUE (25%)**
9. Nov 2: GUEST + GROUPS  
 • Reading Assignment: *Ambient Findability Chapters 1-2*  
 • Focus on Group Work
10. Nov 9: FINDING OUR WAY: INTRO TO “AMBIENT FINDABILITY”
11. Nov 16: MOOERS, MOORE & METCALFE: THREE THEORIES  
 • Includes group time  
 • Reading Assignment: *Ambient Findability Chapters 5-6*
12. Nov 23: PUSH PULL, PUTTING REALITY IN ITS PLACE, TAXONOMIES  
 • Reading Assignment: *Ambient Findability Chapters 7- end*  
 • Review Class for Quiz, Questions
13. Nov 30: QUIZ & GROUP PRESENTATIONS PT. 1  
 • **Dec 2nd quiz on terms from *Tipping Point* and *Ambient Findability* (15%)**  
 • BEGIN GROUP PRESENTATIONS: 10 minute maximum wherein you share the ideas, conclusions and challenges of your media consulting group.
14. Dec 7: GROUP PRESENTATIONS PT. 2  
**GROUP WORK CONSULTING PAPER DUE (25%)**

Finals Week There is no final for this class, I will be available by appointment.

### **Furlough Notice**

Due to the devastating effects of current budget crisis in California, I have been furloughed nine days each semester of this academic year, representing a 9.23% reduction in both workload and compensation. A furlough is an unpaid day off on a faculty member's regularly-scheduled workday. In order to satisfy legal and ethical requirements of the California Labor Code, I am required to submit formal certification that I will not work on my furlough days. I am prohibited from teaching, conducting scholarly research, consulting with students, responding to email or voicemail, providing assignment feedback, or participating in any CSU work-related activities on my furlough days. Furlough dates vary by professor; my Fall Semester furlough dates are [here or in the course syllabus schedule].

The CSU faculty agreed to take furlough days in order to preserve jobs for as many CSU employees as

possible, and to serve as many students as possible, in the current budget crisis. The agreement that governs faculty furloughs acknowledges that "cuts of this magnitude will naturally have consequences for the quality of education that we can provide." Within the furlough context, I will make every effort to support your educational experience at CSUSM. Visit CSUSM Budget Central [<http://www.csusm.edu/budgetcentral/>] to learn about the state budget crisis and how it impacts your educational opportunities. To avoid the continued loss of higher education availability in California, exercise your right to voice an opinion. Contact information for state legislators and the governor are provided at Budget Central.

## Key Concepts and Vocabulary

Short Heads and Long Tails	Hits and Niches	Broadcasting, Cablecasting,
Narrowcasting	Analog and Digital	Hardware and Software
Water cooler effect	Push and Pull	“Democratizing production”
“Democratizing distribution”	Filters	Pro-Am
Exposure	Aggregators	Self-publishing & POD
Signal to Noise	Sturgeon’s Law	Zero Sum game
Black Swan effect	Pre and Post Filters	Big Box Retailers
Digital Natives	Tags	Open and Closed Source
Viral Memes	Power laws: 80/20 and 99%	Tipping Point
Epidemic	Mavens, Connectors, &Salespeople	Stickiness
Context	Moore’s Law	Mooer’s Law
Metcalfe’s Law	Interwingling	Taxonomies

*Other random vocabulary around distribution and technology that are good to know:*

“Gross” and” Net,” Theatrical, non-theatrical, home video, and foreign; cyberspace, GPS, iPod, mp3s TiVo, PDA, filesharing, pirating, BitTorrent, texting, video games, IM’s, websites, word-of-mouth, Bluetooth, Copyright Law, Fair Use, DRM, Creative Commons, the list goes on...

## Notes

- **Plagiarism:** In the CSUSM *General Catalog* (2001) plagiarism is defined as: not giving proper credit for ideas, words, or “specific substance of another’s work,” (P-5) claiming authorship on a group project without actually doing the work, claiming someone else’s artistic or scholarly work as your own. Teachers at CSUSM are required to report all suspected instances of plagiarism to the Dean of Students, which may lead to disciplinary action. <http://library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353>
- **Missed classes:** Life does intrude on school occasionally. However, you are accountable for getting notes on work done during any missed class and on assignments due from your classmates. Please get their info in the space provided below.
- **University Email:** All email should come from and go to your university account. Figure out or get help on how to forward it if you don’t use the system often so you stay up-to-date on class activities.
- **Adult content:** A democratic society is based upon free expression. Our projects, discussions, guests, and may involve vulgarity, adult content, and reviled ideas. Voltaire wisely said: “I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it.” Key words here are “civil” and “free.”

•Disabilities: Students with disabilities who require reasonable accommodations must be approved for services by providing appropriate and recent documentation to the Office of Disabled Student Services (DSS). This office is located in Craven Hall 5205, and can be contacted by phone at (760) 750-4905, or TTY (760) 750-4909. Students authorized by DSS to receive reasonable accommodations should meet with me during my office hours in order to ensure confidentiality

**Group Partners**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_